

ANIMALS - COYOTES

Coyotes Casing Local Houses Wildlife presence felt by Duxbury residents

BY DEBORA BABIN KATZ

Signs of spring are everywhere in Duxbury - trees blossoming, daffodils dotting yards and an abundance of birds. After a long but mild winter, all kinds of wildlife, including the fox and coyote, are appearing in residential and beach areas.

Duxbury, like most south suburban areas, provides an ideal environment for raccoons, skunks, deer, foxes and coyotes. Suburbs are the best habitat for these animals, noted Susan Langlois of the Massachusetts Division of Fish-

eries and Wildlife. This is because large forested areas are carved out to make parcels for residential property thus creating "fragmented forests where two different types of habitats meet - forest to field and forest to ponds," explained Langlois adding that coyotes are particularly attracted to these "transitional areas."

It is no surprise to wildlife experts and local animal control officials that coyotes and foxes are making their presence known to residents of Lake

Continued on page 27

Duxbury Clipper

Wednesday, April 28, 1999

Wildlife Make Home In Duxbury

Continued from page 1

Shore Drive in Duxbury. Here, houses are nestled in wooded areas around Lower Chandler Pond. "I knew this would be a trouble area this spring," said Haley-Dee Parlin, Duxbury's Animal Control Officer.

Lake Shore resident, Denise Clinton and neighbor Gynne Sisko, have been greeted most mornings by either a fox or coyote. Both appear to be casing the area for Sisko's cat among other available food sources. "You can see the bites on my cat's tail from where he was attacked earlier this year," remarked Sisko who now keeps her cat in doors at night. Recently, Sisko's husband encountered the fox early one morning in order save their cat, she added.

until 9, returning around five thirty at night," added Clinton who is worried about the safety of her children boarding the school bus each morning.

Duxbury's coyotes are known as the Eastern Coyote. They grow to the size of a medium-sized dog with thick hair and a coloring that ranges from grayish black to blond. They have a long, thin nose and pointed, erect ears. Its population is growing because of its ability to adapt to any environment. "They're opportunists and will eat anything and everything," noted Paul Bruce, who maintains a wildlife sanctuary on Birch Street.

Foxes, coyotes and other wildlife visit the unused bog that is part of his wildlife sanctuary. "The bog has a lot of



The home of Denise Clinton on Lake Shore Drive is a regular local hang-out for coyotes.

Photo by Debora Katz

One coyote cased the Sisko's house, trapping the family inside while they watched and followed it from one window to the next, described Gynne Sisko. "He usually shows up at 6 in the morning and stays

moles, mice, mink, and muskrat and coyotes love rodents," added Bruce. Coyotes live in an area that varies from 4 to 30 square miles and their primary food sources are small rodents, rabbits, deer, birds, snakes, frogs and insects," noted Mass Wildlife. However, they adapt well to any situation and will feed off of garbage, pet food and "unprotected pets, including house cats, and have been known to attack domestic dogs." Coyotes can live in cities, and have recently been seen in Brockton and Worcester. "A coyote feeding

off unsecured trash dumpsters in Hall's Corner has been seen twice by Duxbury police officers," added Parlin.

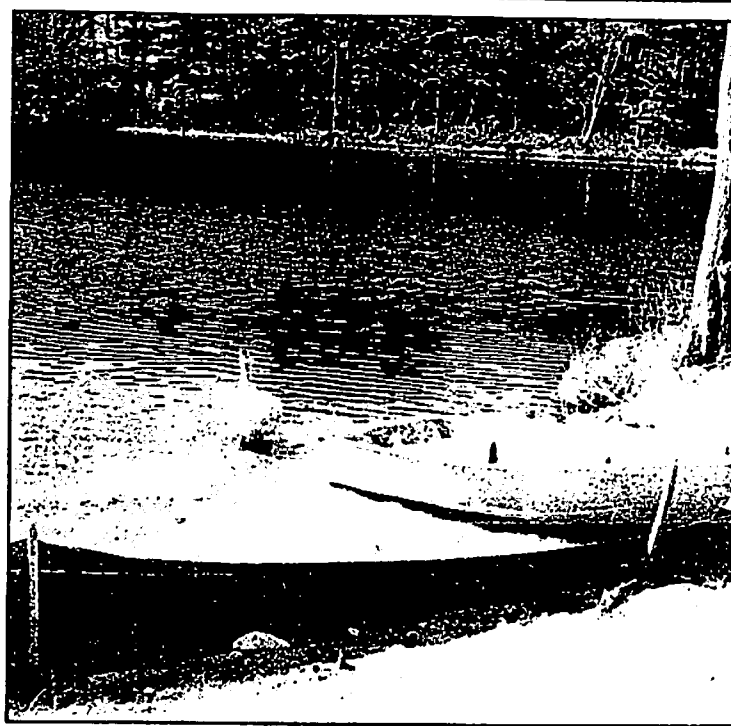
By nature, coyotes are usually 'shy and elusive.' Problems arise, however, once coyotes lose their fear of humans, as seen in the attack of a small child in Sandwich by a coyote this past year. "In that case, the neighborhood had been visited by the coyote for 9 days, morning and afternoon, and the animal lost all its fear of humans, even jogging behind a runner one morning before the incident," explained Steve Hurley, manager of the Southeastern district of Masslife in Hyannis.

Lake Shore resident, Denise Clinton and neighbor Gynne Sisko, have been greeted most mornings by either a fox or coyote.

Hurley's recommendation to Duxbury residents faced with a problem coyote is "to instill fear of humans in the coyote by scaring it off using loud noises so it will realize it isn't welcome in the area." Pots and pans work well, he added. The key to avoiding a tragedy with coyotes and other wildlife is keeping your distance from them and not feeding wild animals, the wildlife experts noted.

In the case of the Sandwich boy, the coyote had "no fear connection and was habituated into a situation," said Langlois. The coyote was simply pursuing a moving object, chasing kids on bikes and joggers, and couldn't distinguish the moving object as man versus a food source, she added.

Although there is a statewide harvest season for coyotes from November to February, hunting coyotes requires proper licenses under the supervision of Masslife, and is a



This goose is one of a number of wild animals spotted near the wildlife sanctuary on Birch Street.

Photo by Debora Katz

"restricted activity." The FireArm Dispatch Law also governs those harvesting coyotes and mandates "no fire arm can be used 150 feet from a paved road and 500 feet from a habitat or dwelling," said Langlois.

Massachusetts's law also prohibits capturing and removing wild animals to another location. "Town animal control officers' jobs are to deal with domestic animals, and they may provide technical advice to residents regarding wildlife," but they can not catch and remove problem wildlife, said Langlois.

The law aside, releasing problem wildlife animals to another area often doesn't work for a variety of reasons, added Langlois. "Grey squirrels, raccoons, and other wildlife will keep coming back, two or three weeks later, to where it recalls its food resource."

The number of problem wildlife situations for Duxbury residents appears to be on the rise. The town's animal control officer admits "that for every call I get about a loose dog or cat, I receive two wildlife calls." Residents of Lake Shore Drive and other similar residential areas continue to deal with coyote and fox, and are wary of summer months when coyote pups, born in April and May, will add to the population. "I don't mind sharing the world with wildlife, but I want to be safe," added Clinton.



Tom Kenney sent us this photo of a fox spotted on the Gurnet.